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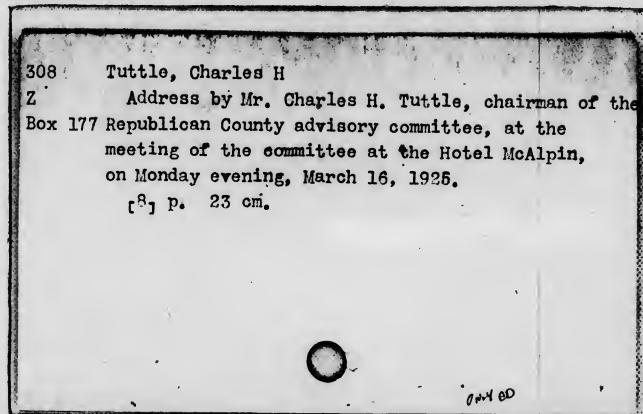
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Address by

MR. CHARLES H. TUTTLE

Chairman of the Republican County Advisory Committee



At the Meeting of the Committee at the
HOTEL MCALPIN
On Monday Evening, March 16, 1925

Address by Mr. Charles H. Tuttle
Chairman of the Republican County Advisory Committee

At the Meeting of the Committee at the Hotel McAlpin
on Monday Evening, March 16, 1925

SINCE our last meeting we have witnessed a great educational event. Dramatically, but with judicial conclusiveness, demagoguery has been shown to be, as always, the people's worst enemy; and the question now before the voters is simply whether an administration which has humbugged and exploited them for the sake of maintaining a sham political issue shall be continued in power.

I

The Findings by the Governor and Judge McAvoy as to the responsibility for the intolerable transit conditions.

Since we last met, this Administration, infatuated with its own gift for denunciation, called upon the Democratic Governor of this State to place upon the Transit Commission the ignominy of responsibility for the intolerable transit conditions in this city. The Governor responded by appointing a distinguished jurist, a Democrat in private life. After hearing the leaders of this Administration in person and examining their proofs, this judge rendered his verdict that not the Transit Commission but this Administration was the guilty party. So convincing was the report and so conclusive the evidence, that the Governor publicly informed the legislature that he concurred in the several findings and made them his own.

Now what are these findings by the Governor and Judge McAvoy? Let the report supply its own words:

(1) "The Transit Commissioners are not chargeable with the failure to build the much needed new subway lines or extend the existing subways. The repeated and persistent refusals of the Mayor and other members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to adopt proposals for the validation of new routes and to approve contracts for construction of routes already validated or provided for in the Dual Contracts of 1913, completely frustrated provision for increased transit facilities."

(2) "The rejection of contracts (by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment) without any assigned good reason or because of hostility to the Transit Commission, is indefensible. Obviously it could only prevent the building of the new subways which were so acutely needed."

II

What do the Findings by the Governor and Judge McAvoy as to the Administration's responsibility for the intolerable transit conditions, mean to the travelling public?

To the travelling public, these findings mean that for seven years in the past and for some years to come, they are forced to be a city of straphangers, while the Administration gets its dividend in a sham political issue and the rapid transit companies get their pecuniary return from the over-crowded conditions. To the travelling public, these findings also mean that the only effect which this Administration has had upon the matter of fare has been vastly to increase to the people the cost of transportation. By frustrating the construction of new subways and by thus increasing the difficulty of comfortably and directly reaching destination, the Administration has forced us to pay double or treble fares and to yield tribute to the taxicab companies. In short, the people have been mulcted of millions to purchase a political bauble for City Hall and to pay the price of a do-nothing policy which incidentally has meant more millions to the rapid transit interests.

III

What do the Findings by the Governor and Judge McAvoy mean to the women of this City?

These findings mean that responsibility for the daily indignities and not infrequent indecencies which they have been and are being obliged to endure, rests squarely upon this Administration. While they have suffered in health and self-respect, "the Mayor and other members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment," say the Governor and Judge McAvoy, "have completely frustrated provision for increased transit facilities."

IV

What do the Findings by the Governor and Judge McAvoy mean to the taxpayers of this City?

To the taxpayers these findings mean that this Administration, while talking about transit but doing nothing, has for seven years relieved itself of the cost of constructing new subways, and thereby, and notwithstanding a constantly expanding debt limit, has enabled itself to waste in unparalleled extravagance the people's money otherwise available for new subways. During the eight years of the Gaynor-Mitchel period eighty-seven miles of subway were built, but during the seven years of this Administration only two and one-quarter miles have been built notwithstanding that in the Gaynor-Mitchel period the city's borrowing

capacity expanded only \$300,000,000 as against \$600,000,000 under this Administration. This huge sum, properly conserved, should have been sufficient to finance not only the cost of new schools but also the cost of new subways. But what has actually happened? Notwithstanding the building of no new transit facilities, the bonded debt of this City has increased until it is now nearly \$200 per capita, an amount far in excess of the per capita bonded indebtedness of Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago or Cleveland.

Moreover, during this period, and without building any new subways, the per capita cost of the municipal government has risen so rapidly that, according to the Government Census Bureau, it stood at \$72.38 per person in 1923—far higher than in any other large city in the country. At the same time the cost of government in Philadelphia was only \$55.06 per person.

And now, having diverted the people's available money from new subways and realizing that the McAvoy report has enlightened the people, the Administration is frantically seeking to place an additional burden of \$275,000,000 upon the taxpayers and rentpayers, and incidentally to get the spending of a sum of money so vast as to entrench itself in power for a decade to come.

V

What do the Findings of the Governor and Judge McAvoy mean to the rent-payers of this City?

To the rent-payers these findings mean two things.

In the first place, they mean that the seven-year frustration of increased transit facilities, of which this Administration has been found guilty, has been one of the prime causes of the extravagantly high rents which have denied to multitudes even the bare comforts of existence. By confining the long-haul traffic to the wholly inadequate existing lines, this Administration cut off otherwise natural areas for the housing of our vast population and threw a golden harvest into the laps of landlords who owned dwellings or apartment houses near the few existing lines.

In the second place, these findings mean that the rent-payers of this City have suffered more than any other part of the community from the increased cost of transportation and the skyrocketing of taxation which by raising assessments and tax rates has given landlords an eagerly grasped excuse for continuously marking up rents.

VI

What do the Findings of the Governor and Judge McAvoy mean to the merchants and business men of this City?

In the first place, they mean millions of dollars added daily to overhead costs, not only through increased taxes due to the waste of public funds otherwise available for new subways, but

also through the paralyzing congestion of our streets, making transportation and travel extraordinarily expensive in time and money. By frustrating adequate facilities for getting anywhere for five cents, this Administration has caused the taxicab industry so to flourish at the public expense that the main arteries of travel are almost paralyzed. And now, stung into a search for quack remedies in order to offset the McAvoy report, the Administration is proposing to overlay our already congested streets with a network of huge buses, thus adding to the cost and difficulty of transporting goods. These franchises, says the Administration, will be worth \$150,000,000, and will be for short periods only—thus unceasingly furnishing to the political traction manipulators from time to time in office extraordinary powers against which the whole history of American municipal government has taught us to beware.

Furthermore, if these bus franchises are worth any such sum, it is solely because this Administration's seven-year frustration of increased transit facilities has made thus fabulously valuable this auxiliary means of getting additional fares out of the pockets of the people.

VII

Who are the losers and the beneficiaries by reason of this Administration's frustration of new subways?

Of course, the only losers from the political traction manipulation of which the Governor and Judge McAvoy find this Administration guilty, are the people; and the only beneficiaries are the taxicab companies, the seekers after bus franchises, the existing traction interests, and the political traction manipulators whose object has been to have an issue rather than subways.

What, then, is the remedy? Is it to write a blank check for \$275,000,000 in favor of these same political transit manipulators? Or is it to accept the findings of the Governor and Judge McAvoy and put the manipulators themselves out of power?

The Administration asked the Governor to remove the Transit Commission from office because of its alleged responsibility for the intolerable transit conditions. Now that the responsibility has been authoritatively found to rest solely on the Administration, does not the Administration's own logic call for its own removal from office?

The Administration itself fixed removal from office as the only fit penalty for responsibility for the ghastly and costly suffering to which this metropolitan city has been put for seven years, and which it must endure for some years to come. Now that the responsibility has been found by the Governor and an impartial tribunal to rest solely upon the Administration, does there remain anything but to apply to the Administration the very penalty which it itself declared to be the only worthy one?

VIII

The efforts now being made to befuddle the perfectly definite Findings of the Governor and Judge McAvoy as to the Administration's responsibility for the intolerable transit conditions.

Efforts, of course, are being made to befuddle the perfectly definite findings of that report. One of these efforts takes the form of a cry that the five-cent fare must be preserved; and the Administration is seeking to create the semblance of an issue thereon by the mere process of calling its opponents names. Those opponents might well retort that it is not the amount of a single fare but the number of times you pay it, or the amount you pay for substituted facilities, which determines the cost of transportation. But the real answer is that there neither is nor can be any five-cent fare issue. There is no such issue between political parties, because the Republican party has opposed and is opposing any increase in the fare. There *can* be no such issue because the existing contracts stipulate for a five-cent fare; because the Transit Commission has decided against any increase; because the existing statutes guarantee a five-cent fare; because the Interborough Rapid Transit Company in its recent memorial has expressly admitted that it can continue its existing operation on the existing fare; and because, as the McAvoy report finds, the Transit Commission has no power "to alter fares, which have been fixed by contract or in franchise grants." For these reasons, as the McAvoy report itself says, an issue as to increased fare "does not now arise."

The second effort to befuddle the perfectly plain findings of the McAvoy report, centers in the Administration's demand for a blank check of \$275,000,000 for new subways. But even if the political transit manipulation of the last seven years has made it necessary now to put such a staggering mortgage upon the homes of our people, why is that any reason for continuing, rather than discontinuing, an Administration found guilty of deliberately and persistently frustrating rapid transit facilities in this city?

But what reason is there for believing such a staggering mortgage, with all its disastrous consequences to the taxpayer and rentpayer, to be necessary? A successful invader, flushed with victory, could scarcely impose a greater levy upon the city. A statement prepared by Comptroller Craig and read into the record of the McAvoy investigation on December 19, 1924, showed that the city's total borrowing power on December first was \$114,680,000. Mr. Harry A. Gordon, special counsel to the Mayor, has recently stated in his report called "Subway Nickels" that "there can be no question of the city's financial ability to carry forward its present subway construction program"; and stated that of this proposed exemption of \$275,000,000 from the debt limit

\$200,000,000 could be used to pay the price of acquiring for the city the title to the existing subways. And the Mayor himself in his "plan for Real Rapid Transit" declared:

"The city is well able at this time (September 6, 1922) to finance all the initial stages of new subway construction without increasing its borrowing capacity a single dollar. The borrowing capacity today is about \$150,000,000. . . If the city spends its available borrowing margin and additional bond limit to construct new rapid transit lines, it will add hundreds of millions of dollars each year to the assessed value of the taxable real estate and expand the city's borrowing margin accordingly."

The final effort to befuddle the perfectly plain findings of the McAvoy report takes the form of a hemorrhage of denunciation and epithets. But the people are no longer captivated by the Administration's estimate of itself or by its abuse of others. The McAvoy report has shown them that of all the forms of transit manipulation the political is the worst and the most costly.

IX

The Remedy.

Unless the people of this city desire the continuance of the present transit catastrophe and political traction manipulation for another decade, the only possible course is to apply the logic of the Findings of the Governor and Judge McAvoy placing the responsibility for this catastrophe upon this Administration. The remedy is, by removing this Administration from office, to finance new subway construction through the restoration, rather than the abuse, of the city's credit; through taking advantage of the enlarged borrowing capacity of \$75,000,000 within the debt limit which became available on March 1, 1925, and which will be further increased by the increase in assessed valuations through the very construction of new subways; and, finally, and most important of all, through cutting off that waste of the people's money, which has increased the budget to \$420,000,000,—representing by far the largest per capita cost of government of any big city in the United States.

**END OF
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